

DATE: March 23, 2023

TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources  
Co-Chair Dembrow  
Co-Chair Pham  
Senator Anderson  
Senator Frederick  
Representative Holvey  
Representative Bobby Levy  
Representative Emerson Levy  
Representative Owens

FROM: Oregon Water Partnership

RE: **SB 5509 (ODFW 2023-25 Budget)** – Supporting Oregon’s Water Resiliency

Co-Chair Dembrow, Co-Chair Pham, and Members of the Committee,

**Oregon Water Partnership (OWP) supports investments to maintain and enhance the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) Water Quality & Quantity Program (“Water Program”).**

We are a diverse partnership of statewide conservation groups with a common goal: to advocate for balanced water policies that ensure cold clean water to sustain healthy communities, livelihoods, and ecosystems. Our priorities for the 2023 legislative session are to build resilience for Oregon’s water future, bring water data into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, support smart water management, and protect and restore our waters.

During previous sessions, our coalition members have successfully advocated for investments critical to rebuilding ODFW’s long-underfunded Water Program and enhancing the agency’s capacity to engage myriad water issues affecting fish and wildlife. As this Subcommittee is aware, ODFW has a newly reconstituted Habitat Division, and its top priority is addressing instream flow needs. **Oregon Water Partnership strongly supports funding that will help the agency maintain its momentum on addressing instream flow needs and build on investments from the 2021-23 budget (HB 5009) and through the 2022 drought resilience package (HB 5202).**

We believe the investments identified below are consistent with the 2023-25 Co-Chair Budget Framework general principles to Protect Vital Services, Get the Most for Every Dollar, Prioritize Investments in Key Areas, and Plan for the Future. Robust funding for the Water Program also meets the specific Natural Resources program area framework, ensuring “the continuation of existing critical programs and services” and targeting “any available resources for the Natural Resources program area in climate resilience, including wildfire and drought.”

We have reviewed ODFW’s Agency Request Budget and the Governor’s Recommended Budget. We have also offered [coalition input on HB 3124](#), the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security (BiDRAWS) Package, as well as on many of the policy concepts it contains. While each of our organizations has its own priorities and perspectives on other elements of ODFW’s 2023-25 budget, **we are united in providing the following input on necessary investments that support ODFW’s Water Program:**

- **NO CUTS to Current Service Level**
- **POP 107\*\*<sup>1</sup> (Integrated Water Resources Solutions):** \$463,725 GF; \$231,862 OF; 3.0 FTE
- **POP 102\*\* (Habitat Division Policy & Operations):** \$1,797,102 GF; (\$242,131) OF; 4.0 FTE
- **POP 110\*\* (Statewide Stream Temperature Monitoring):** \$393,302 GF; 1.0 FTE
- **POP 105\*\*<sup>2</sup> (Private Forest Accord Data Implementation):** \$20,354,000 GF; \$12,000,000 OF (PFA Mitigation subaccount); 1.0 FTE

<sup>1</sup> \*\* Policy Option Package not included in Governor’s Recommended Budget.

<sup>2</sup> \*\* Policy Option Package reduced in Governor’s Recommended Budget.



**Additional ODFW funding needed:** We have identified two targeted ODFW Water Program initiatives that would greatly benefit from additional funding in the 2023-25 Budget. Neither was included in the ARB because these issues have largely arisen since the Fish & Wildlife Commission approved the Agency Request Budget in mid 2022. Each of these requests would build upon ODFW projects now underway that received funding in the 2022 regular legislative session (HB 5202, section 403). These are:

- **Coldwater refugia identification (\$180,000-\$320,000 for biennium, depending on size of field crew funded):** This funding would hire 2-4 technicians for the 2023 and 2024 summer field seasons who will collect temperature data to better understand where coldwater refugia can protect fish like salmon and trout. ODFW has already purchased all necessary equipment and installed sensors in northwest Oregon, so this funding would be associated with staff and travel to continue this sensor installation work in other regions of the state.
- **Real-time river flow and temperature gauging network (\$750,000 for biennium):** This funding would provide necessary operations and maintenance (O&M) service for long-term management of ODFW's expanding river flow and temperature gauge network. ODFW received funds during the 2022 session for the purchase and installation of gauges and estimated ongoing O&M, but it was subsequently determined that the allocated O&M funding was per biennium rather than per annum. With additional funding to address the unintended O&M shortfall, ODFW will be able to support the robust monitoring network envisioned in the 2022 drought resilience package by adding 15 new gauging stations in drought-impacted areas across the state.

Funding ODFW at this level will leverage and build upon prior investments in the Water Program and will help ODFW achieve their mission "to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations."

Thank you for considering our request to fund these critical needs, and please contact us if you have any questions.

#### **Oregon Water Partnership**

Caylin Barter, Wild Salmon Center, [cbarter@wildsalmoncenter.org](mailto:cbarter@wildsalmoncenter.org)

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Kimberley Priestley, WaterWatch of Oregon, [kjp@waterwatch.org](mailto:kjp@waterwatch.org)

DATE: April 7, 2023

TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
Co-Chair Dembrow Representative Holvey  
Co-Chair Pham Representative Bobby Levy  
Senator Anderson Representative Emerson Levy  
Senator Frederick Representative Owens

FROM: Oregon Water Partnership

RE: **HB 5043 (OWRD 2023-25 Budget)** – Water management for a sustainable future

Co-Chair Dembrow, Co-Chair Pham, and Members of the Committee,

**Oregon Water Partnership (OWP) supports investments in foundational water management and a modern understanding of water availability to enable Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) to accomplish its mission.**

We are a diverse partnership of statewide conservation groups with a common goal: to advocate for balanced water policies that ensure cold clean water to sustain healthy communities, livelihoods, and ecosystems. Our priorities for the 2023 legislative session are to build resilience for Oregon's water future, bring water data into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, support smart water management, and protect and restore our waters.

Underinvestment and lack of capacity within Oregon Water Resources Department has led to over-allocation of water rights, with resulting threats to fish and wildlife, safe and secure access to drinking water, and agricultural economies. As drought and flooding become more frequent and precipitation patterns shift across the state, water management is becoming more complex and contentious.

We have reviewed OWRD's Agency Request Budget and the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB). We have also offered [coalition input on HB 3124](#), the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security (BiDRAWS) Package, as well as on many of the policy concepts it contains. While each of our organizations has its own priorities and perspectives on other components of OWRD's 2023-25 budget, **we are united in supporting the following investments to benefit nature and people in Oregon:**

- **POP 111: Water Use, Supply, and Availability Data (Partially funded in GRB)** – We urge full funding for capacity within OWRD to modernize the state's online tool for understanding of water availability. With full funding, this investment will protect against further over-allocation of water rights and mitigate future water conflict by developing a transparent, publicly-available water availability assessment that can be improved as new data become available. Without full funding, the water availability tool update will be delayed and critically outdated IT systems will not be fixed, yielding a one-time update.
- **POP 114: Watermaster Staff: Improving Water Management (Not included in GRB)** – POP 114 provides critical capacity for on-the-ground staff to measure water use, enforce regulations, and act as a liaison between the agency and communities.
- **POP 119: Studying Springs in the Deschutes Basin (Not included in GRB)** – Springs are among the most biodiverse and climate-resilient habitats in all of Oregon. They are the interface between groundwater and surface water, and provide ecologically and economically important late-season flows in the Deschutes River and its tributaries. This investment enables the agency to understand impacts of drought and groundwater withdrawal on the spring flow that supports the Deschutes River.



- **No reductions to OWRD’s Current Service Level** – A recent Advisory Report by Oregon’s Secretary of State concluded that “...natural resource agencies lack funding and capacity to properly enact their duties.”<sup>1</sup> Now is not the time to reduce capacity within OWRD.

We believe the investments identified above are consistent with the 2023-25 Co-Chair Budget Framework general principles to Protect Vital Services, Get the Most for Every Dollar, Prioritize Investments in Key Areas, and Plan for the Future. Robust funding for the Water Program also meets the specific Natural Resources program area framework, ensuring “the continuation of existing critical programs and services” and targeting “any available resources for the Natural Resources program area in climate resilience, including wildfire and drought.”

Funding these items will leverage and build upon prior investments in the agency, and help OWRD achieve its goals to “directly address Oregon’s water supply needs” and “restore and protect streamflows and watersheds to ensure the long-term sustainability of Oregon’s ecosystems, economy, and quality of life.”

Members of OWP have supported various investments at OWRD during the 2021 Regular Session related to improving the agency’s data and capacity for water management (e.g., funding for water availability assessments and science for groundwater and springs in HB 2018; increased capacity for water management per SB 5545 and HB 5006). **We strongly support funding that will build upon these prior investments.**

Thank you for considering our request to fund these critical needs, and please contact us if you have any questions.

#### **Oregon Water Partnership**

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Kimberley Priestley, WaterWatch of Oregon, [kjp@waterwatch.org](mailto:kjp@waterwatch.org)

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<sup>1</sup> Oregon Secretary of State [Report 2023-04](#), January 2023.

DATE: April 20, 2023

TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
Co-Chair Dembrow Representative Holvey  
Co-Chair Pham Representative Bobby Levy  
Senator Anderson Representative Emerson Levy  
Senator Frederick Representative Owens

FROM: Oregon Water Partnership

RE: **SB 5539, 5540 (OWEB 2023-25 Budget)** – Continuity of funding for watershed resilience

Co-Chair Dembrow, Co-Chair Pham, and Members of the Committee,

**Oregon Water Partnership (OWP) supports investments in the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) that build on historic watershed resilience funding allocated during the 2021-2023 biennium.**

We are a diverse partnership of statewide conservation groups with a common goal: to advocate for balanced water policies that ensure cold clean water to sustain healthy communities, livelihoods, and ecosystems. In 2022, we helped secure a \$25.6 million, first-of-its-kind state investment in programs and projects that enhance the drought resilience of Oregon's aquatic ecosystems, including \$10 million to OWEB's Flexible Incentive Account to restore streamflows through voluntary water acquisitions. Our priorities for the 2023 legislative session are to build resilience for Oregon's water future, bring water data into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, support smart water management, and protect and restore our waters.

As drought and flooding become more frequent and precipitation patterns shift across the state, investing in projects and programs that help prepare our watersheds for the next extreme weather event is critical. Significant investments during the 2021-2023 biennium helped kickstart a broad range of projects that increase ecosystem resilience and leverage historic federal funding, but many need more time and agency support to fully ripen. Continuation of grant funding and extension of position authority will ensure these projects can deliver benefits to communities across Oregon in the form of enhanced natural resilience to drought, flooding, wildfire, and heat waves.

We have reviewed OWEB's Agency Request Budget and the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB). We have also offered [coalition input on HB 3124](#), the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security (BiDRAWS) Package, as well as on many of the policy concepts it contains. While each of our organizations has its own priorities and perspectives on other components of OWEB's 2023-25 budget, **we are united in supporting the following investments to benefit nature and people in Oregon:**

- **POP 101, Agency Reorganization: Special Programs (not funded in GRB)** — 1.0 FTE (Special Programs Manager), \$386K GF. This new position will oversee special programs (including post-fire recovery and drought relief) and initiatives to leverage new federal funding for watershed restoration on behalf of the state natural resources agencies. *BiDRAWS Element #5-1.*
- **POP 150, Emergency Response/Recovery Program Continuity (not funded in GRB)** — Limitation of \$2.2 million in General Funds to continue 8.0 FTE limited duration positions is necessary to complete deployment of more than \$36 million in new legislative funding allocated during 2021-2023 biennium. *BiDRAWS Element #5-2.*
- **POP 201, Carryforward for General Fund Emergency Response/Recovery Grants (not funded in GRB)** — Carryforward of \$27 million in General Funds will allow time needed for grantees in local communities impacted by wildfire and drought to complete implementation of OWEB-funded projects that are underway. *BiDRAWS Element #5-2.*



- **POP 145, Water Acquisition Continuity (funded in GRB, only extends LD)** — Limitation of \$382K OF (Flexible Incentive Account) to continue 1.0 FTE (Water Acquisitions Coordinator) and convert to permanent position will enable the state to build a pipeline of voluntary water acquisitions (with companion POP 245). *BiDRAWS Element #5-3.*
- **POP 245, Water Acquisition Grant Funds Continuity (funded in GRB)** — \$9.2 million OF (Flexible Incentive Account) limitation to access funds allocated in 2022 session will support voluntary water acquisitions to improve drought resiliency (with companion POP 145). *BiDRAWS Element #5-3.*

**Note on BiDRAWS Element #6-1: Irrigation Modernization:** House Bill 3124 (BiDRAWS) requests \$70M of OWEB grant funding plus unspecified OWEB staff to administer these funds. Oregon Water Partnership recommends that “Irrigation Modernization” project implementation funding only be available to applicants that use the Allocation of Conserved Water Program to legally protect a portion of the conserved water, ensuring public benefit for public funds.

We believe the investments identified above are consistent with the 2023-25 Co-Chair Budget Framework general principles to Protect Vital Services, Get the Most for Every Dollar, Prioritize Investments in Key Areas, and Plan for the Future. Robust funding for the Water Acquisitions Program also meets the specific Natural Resources program area framework, ensuring “the continuation of existing critical programs and services” and targeting “any available resources for the Natural Resources program area in climate resilience, including wildfire and drought.”

Funding these items will leverage and build upon prior investments in the agency, and help OWEB achieve its mission “to help protect and restore healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies.” Members of OWP supported various investments at OWEB during the 2021 and 2022 Legislative Sessions. **We strongly support funding for 2023-2025 that will build upon these prior investments.**

Thank you for considering our request to fund these critical needs, and please contact us if you have any questions.

### **Oregon Water Partnership**

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